

Total Quality Management & Human Resource Issues:

A Hypothetical Analysis

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Abstract

With the creation of a global market, invention of new technologies, sweeping of nations' boundaries and a shift towards customer focused strategies have resulted in critical competition ever before. The aggressive competitive environment and global economy have fuelled the organization to focus on quality, combined with increasing costs of materials, machinery, manpower and training, as a means of obtaining competitive advantage and their survival. These forces for change also provide an opportunity for an expanded role of human resource management in making TQM succeed.

Total Quality Management has been defined as a system intended to satisfy customer's requirements, a philosophy that stresses a team approach to achieving quality and continuous improvement and a total change in organizational culture. It is no longer being viewed as the responsibility of a single department. It is a company-wide activity that pervades all departments, at all levels. The key element of any quality and productivity improvement program is the employee.

Unfortunately, most human resource management systems generate inconsistencies in the outcomes of quality. HRM should seek the responsibility for implementing TQM programs rather than risk losing their influence over the key element of TQM. Consequently, employee commitment to a TQM program is essential, because of its fundamental employee orientation.

HRM and TQM issues have been studied from several perspectives and this paper investigates in general the fact that TQM has specific relationships with HRM in continuous improvement systems in either a manufacturing or a service environment. The rationale for conducting this research is the need to examine that human resource issues are the core for improved implementation of TQM for the sighted benefits of the organizations.

Key Words: *TQM, HR, TQM/HR issues.*

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1. Introduction & Literature Survey

Total quality management is a set of practices and is significant in a present global competitive era. Manufacturing and quality personnel are apprehensive to find the means to instill quality in all spheres and attain the highest competitive edge. It maximizes the competitiveness through continual improvement of the quality of process, products, people, services and environment as a whole of an organization.

According to Deming (1996) total quality management is a dynamic process involving all levels in an organization to promote never ending improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all eyelets of business. A growing number of organizations use quality management practices as a foundation for generating competitive advantage (Reed et al., 2000). Hackman et al. (1995) claim that TQM as a “social movement”, “a new paradigm in management” (Tuttle, 1991, Grant et al, 1994 Spencer, 1994).

Waldman (1994) suggests that the main purpose of TQM is to continually improve organizational processes resulting in high quality products or services. Smyth and Scullion (1996) the link between HR and TQM had a significant impact on business organizations, consequently, companies have considered and prioritized their requirements. Redman and Mathews (1998) suggest that only the integration of HRM and TQM managed organization will be able to survive in the future.

Total quality management and human resource management have been an important subject matter in management and business research for the past few decades due to its potential to affect a range of organizations and individually desired outcomes.

All corporate strengths are dependent on people”. Human resources are considered the most important asset of an organization, but very few organizations are able to fully harness its potential. Lado and Wilson (1994) define a human resource system as a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions and process that are directed at attracting, developing and maintaining firm’s human resources. People are the prime movers of an organization.

Employee involvement as it is popularly known today was borne out of fundamental beliefs in the benefits of creating positive human relations within the organization (Anthony, 2002). Calvin et al., (1997) argues that reward and recognition systems for individual employees remain one of the controversial areas of quality management. Goran et al, (2005) explores that TQM requires human resources and failing to care for them will affect accordingly the success of TQM. The article describes the emphasis on the human resources of a company that strives towards TQM. As the quality of corporate ethics decreases the outcome of TQM is also affected.

Simon S.K. Lam (1995) reports on what changes employees see TQM programmes having on their jobs and whether they perceive an increase in job satisfaction because of TQM. The study reports that, to ensure the commitment of employees to TQM, human resources management needs must be integrated into the TQM process. The hard side (human resources policies, including the organization of work, pay, working conditions, reward systems and the training and development of the employees) must be accompanied by equal attention to the soft side (commitment to quality and job satisfaction) of the process for the success or failure of TQM.

Sun Hongyi (2000) study shows that the management needs to hold a new management philosophy and new attitude towards employees and employees should be provided with the necessary authority, information, skills and reward.

Burhan Fatih Yavas (1995) explores possible answers to the question: what perceptions do employees at different levels in the organization have of the dimensions of quality and, where differences exist, how can the perceptions be more closely aligned? For this, eight factors were delineated. The results show that among the variables, “communications”, “managerial involvement”, “process improvement”, “reward and recognition” and “responsiveness to both external and internal customer demands” was found to be significant. Analysis of the survey results suggests that team efforts had a positive impact on employees’ perceptions of many dimensions of quality. The findings suggest that a significant number of employees did not agree that management had a high commitment to quality. The finding, together with the perceived lack of communication, indicates the need for a greater role for team participation through which better means of communicating information can be determined.

Miller et al. (2000) used to construct like staffing, training, performance appraisal, mentoring compensation, social support and suggested that HRM need to respond in a creative way to TQM for organizational changes. The concern for human issue in TQM was highlighted by Dale et al. (1993) through role of senior managers, training and education, team building, employee involvement and resistance to change management in quality. Oakland and Oakland (2001) highlighted core HR activities like effective communication, teamwork, planned training and development, strategic alignment of HRM policies, employee empowerment and continuous improvement.

Through analysis of literature indicates a significant relation between TQM and HR issues. Although, there is a plethora of research articles have been conducted with different emphasis, with a unique aspect and each with different mode of success, this paper will establish a path to TQM and HR issues with a clear framework. Given the above rationale, the objectives of this study are two folds:

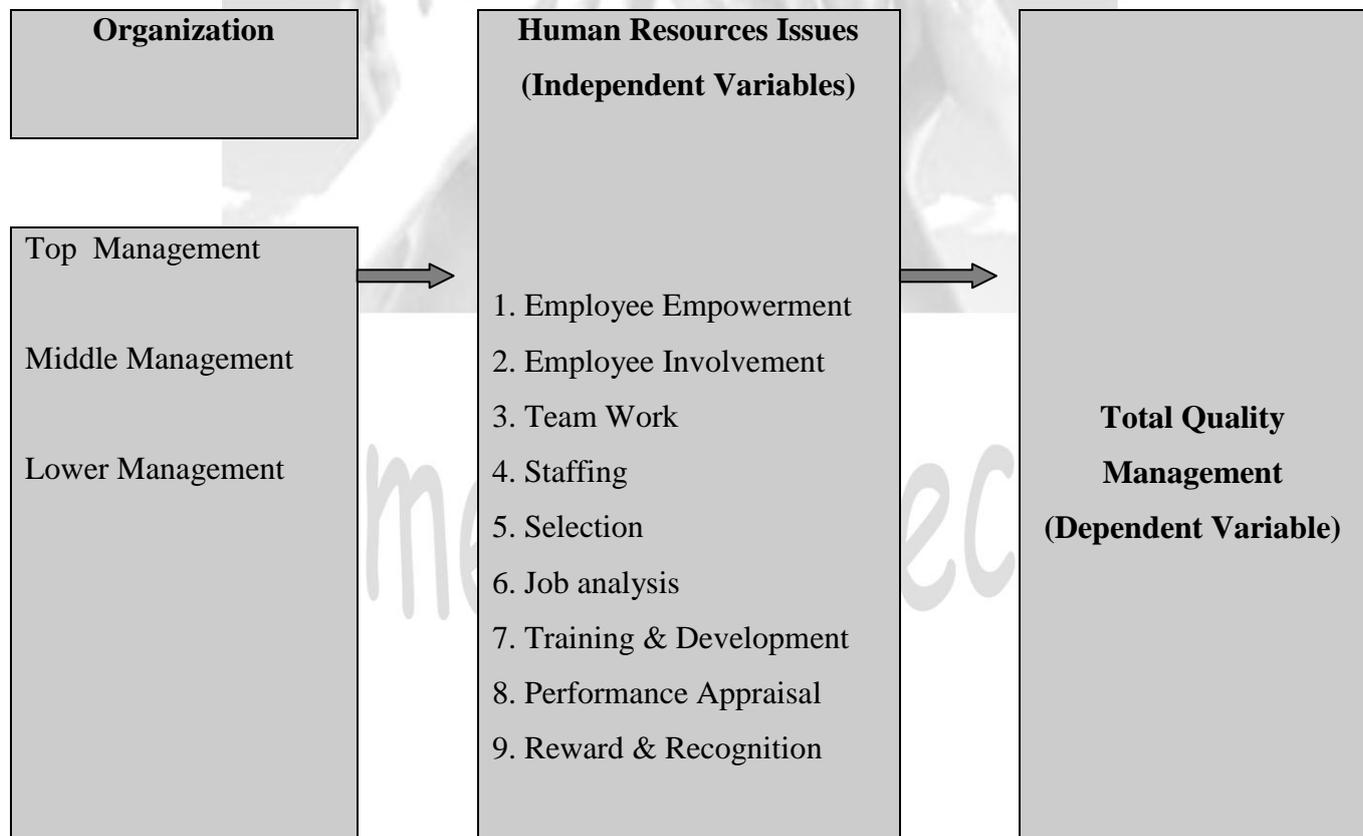
- To develop a conceptual framework of TQM implementation in relation to HRM issues
- To explore the relationships between TQM and HRM

This research explores the degree of impact, the implementation of TQM/HRM issues poses to benefit the employees in the organization.

2. Research Framework and Methodology

The conceptual research framework developed and used for this study is presented in the figure. 1. Based on the literature nine variables, employee empowerment, employee involvement, teamwork, staffing, selection, job analysis, training, performance appraisal, reward & recognition which are commonly emphasized have been identified for the analysis purpose.

Figure 1: Conceptual Research Framework



The conceptual aim of this study focuses on the development of a theoretical model as a systematic way of implementing TQM keeping in mind the HRM issues. The link between HRM issues and TQM framework shows HRM issues are independent variables and total quality management as a whole is a dependent variable. The present study attempts to bridge the gap by providing a basis for a systematic and insightful perspicacity of HRM issues for TQM implementation.

Hypothesis

Based on the extensive study, it would therefore suggest that HRM issues improve TQM implementation. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: HRM issues are positively associated with TQM implementation.

The above hypothesis can be specifically written as:

H1₁: Employee Empowerment is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₂: Employee involvement is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₃: Staffing is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₄: Selection is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₅: Job Analysis is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₆: Teamwork is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₇: Training and development are positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₈: Performance appraisal is positively associated with TQM implementation

H1₉: Reward and Recognition system is positively associated with TQM implementation

Employee Empowerment:

Employee empowerment implies the disparity between success and failure in the pursuit for TQM. Unless employees are given the opportunity to plan and perform their own work assignments, there can be a little initiative for participation in the improvement process. It is generally accepted that a TQM environment fosters employee empowerment. In fact, five of Deming's 14 points relate directly to the notion of involvement and empowerment.

According to the literature, TQM should promote empowerment of front-line employees, giving them more responsibility and information (Schuler and Harris, 1992), Fernandez, (1996); Newall et al, (1991) if quality initiatives to work, there must be sufficient participation. TQM programs improve employee participation in decision making Lam (1996). Boon et al., (2006) feels that empowerment have a strong relationship with the propensity of employees to remain within the organization.

Human resources are the major assets of empowerment that allows team members to recognize their own responsibilities for achieving company goals. Having the capability to problem-solve leads

people composing the teams to seek more opportunities to complete their tasks and to sustain preparation of status reports important to management. These are empowering practices that sustain total involvement in the improvement process which is vital to effect change and, therefore, to the success of TQM efforts.

Hence, H1₁: Employee Empowerment is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Employee Involvement:

Researchers believe that employee involvement is associated with quality management activities such as quality circles and communication. Lawler et al., (1995) feels that the most interesting consequences of his study are how employee involvement and total quality management work together to impact on organizational performance. Evans (1985) and Hogan (1992), employees participate in advisory groups to voice concerns and exchange views on quality issues.

Employee involvement has also been extensively studied in association with TQM and human resources management (Wood and Peccei, 1995; Cheng and Tummala, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998). Beekun, Sundstrom et al. (1990), self-managing work teams typically produce positive results in terms of quality and costs, Partlow (1996) suggested that TQM should be supported by human resources practices such as employee involvement.

Sun, Hongi et al., (2000) result supports the proposition that employee involvement is a prerequisite for TQM and other quality management programs. To implement employment involvement, management needs to hold a new management philosophy and new attitude towards employees and employees should be provided with the necessary authority, information, skills, and reward.

Hence, H1₂: Employee involvement is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Staffing:

Industrial Relations Review and Report (1991) reports that how organizations identify the selection of staff as a key area in total quality management. Bowen et al, (1992) stated that recruitment is consequently imperative along with specific media for advertising with a view to hiring staff and more refined recruitment and selection processes are prerequisite for TQM (Wilkinson et al., 1994). Clinton et al., (1994) argues that the successful recruitment and selection of human resources requires proper knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes compatible with a TQM philosophy.

According to Ahmad et al., (2002) the recruitment and selection process should be identified prospective employees who can work in teams, ability to solve the problems and ideas to foster a quality management philosophy.

Hence, H1₃: Staffing is positively correlated with TQM implementation

Selection:

Devanna, (1984) claims, that the attempt to develop a quality culture starts with the selection of employees with the appropriate characteristics. It is necessary to consider employee's behavior, attitudes and values for any TQM program to be successful. Reference was also made to the recruitment process, appointing people with specific qualities and values that will contribute to the continuing success of the organization (Smyth et al., 1996).

Wilkinson et al., (1994) states that selection and the integration of the new staff in the organization, the human resource cycle will move its focus on to the organization's performance as manifested by control, rewards, and development. More sophisticated recruitment and selection techniques are needed for TQM.

Cascio (1991), Cardy et al., (1991) states the objective of traditional personnel selection processes and differentiation of applicants on one or more dimensions such as knowledge, skill, ability, or motivation. Recruitment should be externally oriented in the main (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). However, some compromise over the internal market is required in order to foster TQM (Schuler and Harris, 1991)

Snape et al., (1995) states that the bid to build up a quality culture should be by selecting and recruiting employees with the necessary attitudinal and behavioral characteristics, Simmons et al., (1995) and Snape et al., (1995) article implies that candidates must fit the organizational culture and the TQM system.

Hence, H1₄: Selection is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Job Analysis:

Job analysis is the process of studying jobs in order to gather and analyze information about the content of a job, the human requirement, and the conditions within which the job is performed (Cascio, 1991; Schneider et al., 1992: and Heneman et al., 1994). Deming argues is counterproductive to a team and system approach to quality output. Deming suggests that job descriptions should establish limits on performance variations instead of detailing specific tasks and duties. If an organization is dissatisfied

with the level of an employee's performance, management should then change the system to allow for increased performance.

However, as stated by Dobbins et al. (1991), the primary focus of traditional job analyses is on an individual employee level and, therefore, individuals are viewed as isolated units within the organization, each with individually defined responsibilities. By extending this perspective, one can see that the selection and evaluation of employees are based on individual criteria. Blackburn et al., (1993) claims that Baldrige Award winning organizations have elements of job descriptions which include innovation, creative problem solving, customer service competencies, cross-functional work teams striving for total quality and to determine efficient areas of cross-training for their employees.

Hence, H1₅: Job Analysis is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Team Work:

The dominant concerns of most businesses focus on efficiency, quality and profitability. The key in any tough competitive market is to minimize costs in order to maximize profits. The two words, *quality* and *profitability*, have not always been used as synonyms; and the quest to find a way to narrow these gaps has been aided by the implementation of teamwork (Conti Betty et al., (1997).

Dean et al., (1994) in their article claims that teamwork is necessary because it involves the collaboration between managers and non-managers, between functions, as well as with customers and suppliers (Dean and Bowen, 1994). Within the context of TQM, teamwork is an important outcome and a condition for continued improvement. It facilitates collaborative efforts to solve quality problems (Waldman, 1994).

Teamwork is central to TQM (Aubrey et al., 1988; Wilkinson, 1992). There is a consensus in the literature that multidisciplinary teamwork in teams composed of members from different organizational functional areas promotes TQM (Mohanty and Sethi, 1996; Schonberger, 1994; Simmons et al., 1995), Boon et al. (2007), teamwork was perceived as the dominant TQM practice, which has a strong association with job satisfaction.

Hence, H1₆: Teamwork is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Training and Development

Training and development are accepted by most theorists as being essential in an implementation of total quality management. Deming's 14 points for managers include, "institute training". "Too often, workers have learned their job from another worker who was never trained properly. They are forced to follow unintelligible instructions. They can't do their jobs because no one tells them how".

TQM can expose organizational inadequacy in training. Mandal et al., (1998), Schonberger, (1994) states companies committed to TQM invest in training, Samson and Terziovski (1993) claims that training is vital for the internal dissemination of quality ideas and its practices, Schonberger, (1994), Schuler et al., (1991), Schuler et al., (1987), Snape et al., (1995) - TQM training is not a single effort, but should be conducted on a continuous basis.

Alan Brown (1994) writes that introducing TQM requires an increased training effort for several reasons. First, awareness programs are needed simply to inform people of what TQM is, how it can be introduced and what it can do. Employee training is fundamental for many TQM programs such as the adoption of new quality concepts, the set-up and practices of customer satisfaction systems, the use of statistical quality control, or the change of culture or quality control circle (Bowen et al., 1992 and Yang, 2006).

Hence, H17: Training and development are positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Performance Appraisal:

Bowman, (1994) and Boudreaux, (1994) writes that total quality proponents take a different view of how performance appraisal should be conducted. Deming (1986) highlights that the importance of the system rather than the individual as the critical factor in determining performance. Research has shown that rating performance is difficult in distinguishing systemic causes of employee performance from individual causes (Carson et al., 1991). Regardless of their shortcomings, performance appraisals are recognized by most TQM proponents to serve imperative functions in the management of human resources (Eckes, 1994).

Soltani et al., (2004), Soltani et al., (2003), reports that the traditional performance appraisal systems are likely to obstruct the aims of TQM by placing a heavy emphasis on the individual employee as the main contributor to organizational performance. The main problems of performance appraisal, is that it ignore the existence of variability in the system, it holds workers responsible for errors that may be the result of faults within the system and it undermines teamwork. However, Blackburn et al., (1993), Wilkinson et al., (1994), Simmons et al., (1995) conclude that performance appraisal is compatible with TQM if it is based on quality criteria

Although it argued that formal performance evaluation systems facilitate improved total quality performance, Schuler and Jackson, (1987) and Simmons et al., (1995) states that performance appraisal can be related to individual performance, and should be focused on measuring organizational and group performance. Solatani, (2003) concludes that performance appraisal is used fro training and

development through formal evaluation but at the same time Snape et al., (1995) argues that compensation and incentive plans have also been a controversial issue in the quality management.

Deming (1986) opposes pay incentives, considering that recognition rather than reward is important. However, Ehigie et al., (2005) emphasis on the alignment between the reward system and TQM is required. Consequently, rewards should foster cooperation, employee involvement and teamwork, not emphasize individually oriented compensation (Wilkinson et al., 1994, Yang, 2006).

(Hence, H1₈: Performance appraisal is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Rewards and Recognition:

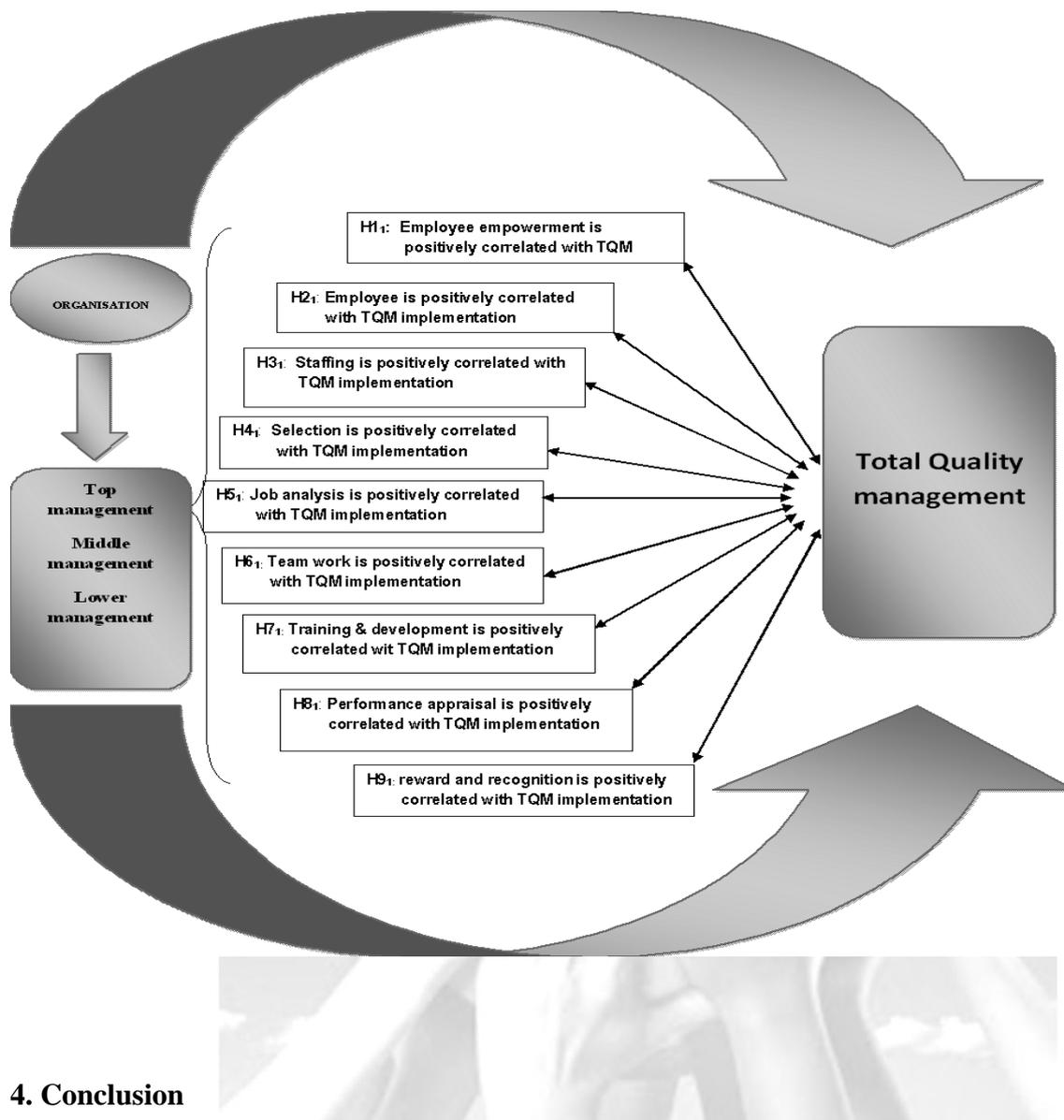
Organizations typically design and implement compensation and reward programs as a means of focusing employee attention on specific behaviors that the Organization considers necessary to achieve its desired outcome or objective (Henderson, 1994). Deming (1986) states that work standards, MBO should be eliminated, since incentive programs are based on expectance and reward theory, the assumption is that when rewards and incentives are linked to the achievement, reward and recognition shall strengthen quality proportionate to short-range monetary concern (Evans et al, 2002).

Meanwhile, Herzberg's (1996) writes that recognition is perceived as one of essential motivators which determine positive behavior, accordingly, employees then receive compensation based on their individual Performance in comparison to some preestablished objective, if the objective is the reduction of errors and the increase of quality, the consideration of system variance factors becomes an essential consideration in order to correctly reward individual performance (Henderson, 1994).

Total quality management removes the traditional career ladder because of the flat flexible structure within the organization. Total quality management sets, on the other hand, the cross functional experience as a reward. A key element in the cycle is that of rewards in order to retain and motivate the staff, especially in work areas facing major competition (Bowen et al., 1992). In the attempt to hold on to employees, rewards such as cash may play an important role. Bowen et al., (1992) stresses upon that if any reward system must persuade both teams as well as group work in addition to quality improvements.

Hence, H1₉: Reward and Recognition system is positively correlated with TQM implementation.

Figure 2. Relationship between TQM and HR



4. Conclusion

The present study strongly proposes a comprehensive attitude for matching the dimensions of TQM and HR issues. The strength of HRM practices lies in the prospective modification and adaptation within the TQM framework. The paper emphasizes the fact that TQM has specific relationships with HR issues in continuous improvement. Improvement in performance can be enhanced by enhancing the performance of the people.

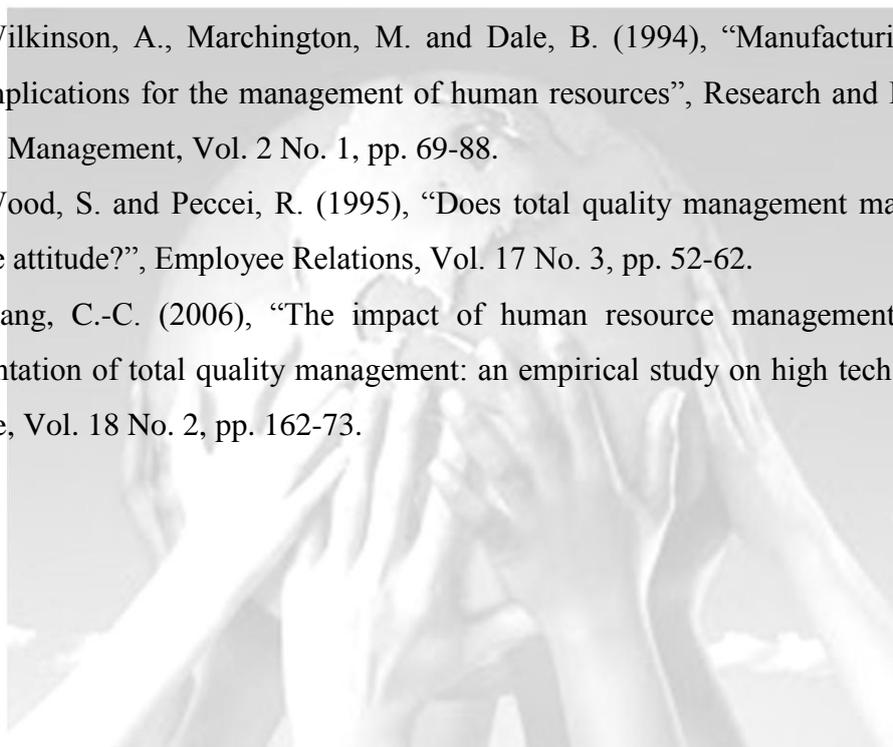
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